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ABSTRACT

This analysis compares student test scores before and after school busing in New Castle County, Delaware, in an attempt to see if busing to achieve racial balance reduces the achievement gap between black and white students. School authorities pre-tested students with the California Achievement Test (CAT) in 1978-79, the first year of busing, and used that as the basis for subsequent comparison. Since CAT scores (though not broken down by race) have risen each year, school authorities and the media have claimed that desegregation is working. Independent analysis of the few available statistics, however, presents a different picture. With pre- and post-busing scores made relative to a statewide average (percentage) of 100, a significant comparison is possible despite changes in the types of test administered and their initial mathematical presentation. Pre-busing test scores were not compiled by race. Nevertheless, the very racial imbalance among the districts involved in the pre-busing years enables a significant before and after comparison. Tables show the official 1981-82 test scores for all grades and the derived scores by race for the grades tested in the pre-busing years (grades 1, 4, and 8). A comparison of the two shows an increased gap between white and black scores, leading to the conclusion that forced busing in New Castle County has failed insofar as achievement is concerned. (CMG)

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Test Scores in New Castle County, DE.

--Before and After Busing

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UD 023 076

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS, INC.

TEST SCORES IN NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DE. - BEFORE AND AFTER BUSING

Does racial balance busing reduce the achievement gap between black and white children ? This analysis will compare student test scores before and after an ambitious city-suburbs school racial balancing scheme in New Castle County, Delaware.

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Background

Under a federal court order (Evans vs. Buchanan) implemented in September, 1978, eleven school districts in New Castle County were combined into a single district, with racial balance busing to each school in an area involving 250 square miles and nearly two thirds of the public school students in the entire state of Delaware.

The "superdistrict" was divided into four pupil assignment areas. One area combined three majority white suburban districts with a portion of the majority black Wilmington district. A second area combined four more suburban and majority white districts with another portion of Wilmington. A third area combined an eighth majority white suburban district - the state's largest - with a third portion of Wilmington.

In these three pupil assignment areas, on a staggered grade basis, children from the eight former suburban districts are bused into Wilmington for three of their twelve school years while children from Wilmington are bused to suburban schools for nine of their twelve years.

A fourth pupil assignment area combined a small majority black suburban district with a larger majority white suburban district with children bused between the two on the same "9-3" basis.

In 1981, the "superdistrict" was divided into four school districts based on the identical assignment area configurations.

This analysis will deal with a composite of the area involving the eight former suburban districts as combined with Wilmington. As described above, the unchanged historical boundries involved with the busing order make such a comparison possible. This analysis thus involves test scores in a composite of the present Brandywine, Red Clay and Christina districts and their predecessor components.

No before and after comparisons by school authorities

With the start of the busing order (1978-79 school year), statewide testing was changed to the easier-to-pass California Achievement Test (CAT).

State and local school authorities have made no effort, at least for public knowledge, to compare test scores since the start of the busing order with previous scores. Instead, the authorities

"pre-tested" with the CAT in 1978-79, the first forced busing year, and use that as the basis for subsequent comparison.

Under this process, with CAT scores rising each year, school authorities and the media have claimed that "desegregation is working." And, although test scores during the first three years of forced busing (1978-79 through 1980-81) were not broken down by race, school authorities hinted at minority gains.

(Note: In 1983, school authorities, admitting that the CAT scores "might have been inflated", discarded the CAT and for 1984 contracted to use the California Test of Basic Skills instead.)

Grades tested

Prior to the busing order, statewide testing was done in grades 1, 4 and 8 only. A modified version of the Cooperative Primary Test was used in grade 1 and the Sequential Test of Educational Progress (STEP) was used in grades 4 and 8. These results were based on a statewide average of 50.

In 1977-78 (the year before forced busing began), an "objective reference" test was administered statewide and scores by district are not available for that year. In addition, 4th grade was not tested in the 1976-77 school year.

Thus, the latest pre-busing scores available are the 1st and 8th grades for 1976-77 and the 4th grade for 1975-76.

With the start of forced busing and the switch to the CAT in 1978-79, statewide testing has been administered in grades 1 through 8 and 11. The CAT scores are based on a national average of 50.

Finding a common denominator

Despite these difficulties, simple mathematics can readily produce a meaningful common denominator.

Simply doubling pre-busing scores (based on a statewide average of 50) produces a statewide average of 100 for those years.

And, although the CAT scores of the busing years are based on a national average of 50, the state school authorities have included in their released data the state CAT average by grade based on the national average scores. It is a simple matter to convert these scores to a statewide average of 100, just as was done with pre-busing scores.

Thus, with both "before" and "after" scores made relative to a statewide average (percentage) of 100, a significant comparison is possible despite the change in type of test and their initial mathematical presentation.

Pre-busing scores not broken down by race

Pre-busing test scores were not compiled by race. Indeed, even with the start of busing scores were not released by race until 1982 (1981-82 school year, the fourth under the busing order).

Finding a way of making before and after comparisons by race

Nevertheless, the very racial imbalance among the districts in the pre-busing years enables a significant before and after racial comparison.

As is shown in Table I, the eight former suburban districts involved in this anlaysis collectively averaged 94.0 to 97.5 per cent white from 1971-72 to 1976-77.

Meanwhile, the Wilmington district ranged between 79.8 and 84.8 per cent black during those same years.

Certainly, then, the test scores of blacks attending suburban schools during those years could have had little statistical effect on the average test scores for those districts.

Likewise, the few Wilmington whites during those years (who might be presumed to have been of a lower average socioeconomic status than their suburban counterparts) would have had a diminished statistical effect upon the average Wilmington test scores for those years.

Thus, for the purposes of this analysis, we boldly posit that the suburban scores are the "white" pre-busing scores and the Wilmington scores are the "black" pre-busing scores. We will then compare these pre-busing "white" and "black" scores with the actual white and black test scores of 1981-82 - the fourth year of forced busing.

TABLE I - RACIAL RATIOS IN SELECTED YEARS

School year	1971-72	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77
8 suburban districts				
Enrollment	57,594	54,916	52,999	49,674
% white	97.5	96.3	95.7	94.0
% black	2.1	2.7	3.1	4.6
Wilmington district				
Enrollment	15,327	14,419	13,852	13,383
% white	18.7	12.0	9.8	9.7
% black	79.8	83.6	84.7	84.8

Effect of white enrollment decline on the scores

Before going on to make our before and after test score comparison by race, we would be remiss in not pointing out the probable effect of white enrollment decline on the level of white scores in 1981-82.

White enrollment in the "desegregation" area used herein (eight suburban districts and Wilmington) went from 59,011 in 1971 to 54,604 in 1974 (white flight began early in 1975 as parents became aware of the court's city-suburbs intentions) to 44,353 in 1977 to (as white flight accelerated with the start of forced busing in September, 1978) 28,872 in 1981.

The effect of this massive white withdrawal on the average white scores for 1981-82 cannot be measured here. Suffice it to say that absent such a withdrawal from the public schools of thousands of affluent whites the white scores for 1981-82 would have been higher and the increased gap between white and black scores would have been even wider.

MAKING THE BEFORE AND AFTER COMPARISON

Table II lists the 1981-82 test scores by race for the composite area involving eight former suburban districts and the City of Wilmington.

Table III then lists our dervived scores by race for the grades tested in the pre-busing years 1971-72 to 1976-77.

Before going on, let's review the nature of the two tables. Table II is composed of the actual 1981-82 CAT scores by race, converted to a statewide average of 100 and weighted according to the actual white and black enrollments of the three current school districts. The white scores are impacted by a 47 percent white enrollment loss over seven years. Absent such massive white enrollment decline, the white scores would be much higher. On the other hand, the black scores would then be relative to a higher resulting state average and would thus be lower than displayed. Thus, the gap between whites and blacks, after four years of forced busing, would be even greater than shown.

In Table III, the "white" scores are those for all races in the virtually all-white suburban districts (94 to 97.5 percent) for the pre-busing years. If the small non-white score factor could be removed here, the actual white scores might be slightly higher. The "black" scores are those for all races in the overwhelmingly black Wilmington district and if actual black scores were available here they would probably be slightly lower than those displayed.

With it all, with some factors offsetting others, the scores displayed are entirely reasonable for the purposes herein.

TABLE II 1981-82 TEST SCORES BY RACE FOR THE BRANDYWINE, RED CLAY & CHRISTINA DISTRICTS COMBINED

Grade	White	Black	Difference
1	108.4	82.2	- 26.2
2	107.2	83.7	- 23.5
3	107.1	82.2	- 24.9
4	106.7	80.6	- 26.1
5	108.5	81.0	- 27.5
6	108.0	80.4	- 27.6
7	107.9	78.7	- 29.2
8	107.5	76.8	- 30.7
11	111.9	74.8	- 37.1

State Avg. = 100.0

TABLE III TEST SCORES, PREDECESSOR COMPONENTS OF THE BRANDYWINE, RED CLAY & CHRISTINA DISTRICTS COMBINED 1971-72 to 1976-77, AS ESTIMATED BY RACE

	White	Black	Difference
GRADE 1			
1971-72	107.2	94.6	- 12.6
1972-73	106.9	97.4	- 9.5
1973-74	106.5	93.4	- 13.1
1974-75	106.1	91.4	- 14.7
1975-76	104.9	89.0	- 15.9
1976-77	104.4	92.4	- 12.0
GRADE 4			
1971-72	107.6	82.4	- 25.2
1972-73	107.8	84.6	- 23.2
1973-74	107.5	84.2	- 23.3
1974-75	106.0	85.2	- 20.8
1975-76	106.4	81.0	- 25.4

GRADE 8			
1971-72	107.1	82.8	- 24.3
1972-73	107.1	80.8	- 26.3
1973-74	106.7	81.4	- 25.3
1974-75	106.7	83.0	- 23.7
1975-76	106.9	80.4	- 26.5
1976-77	107.2	82.8	- 24.4

State Avg. = 100.0

In grade 1 for 1981-82, the gap between whites and blacks, 26.2 points, is, on the average, double that of the "segregated" years of Table III. As these are children in their first year of racial balance busing, there certainly are no cumulative effects of the busing order per se to be discerned. However, the gap here may indicate the instant traumatic factors involved in busing six-year olds long distances (remember the "9-3" assignments required to attain racial balance) and placing black youngsters in an instant 75-80 percent white environment. Beyond that, the first grade gap may be indicative of the failure of pre-school outreach programs. Another ominous factor might be the black illegitimacy rate for Delaware, which was 37.2 percent in 1964 and had jumped to 58.8 percent by 1975, the year of birth of the first-graders (and which had climbed to 66.1 percent by 1981).

The reader will note that in the 1981-82 second grade the gap drops to 23.5 points and then begins to increase gradually through the grades.

By the fourth grade (Table II), the gap had increased to 26.1 points. These were children correspondingly in their fourth year of the busing order. In Table III, the gap for the purportedly segregated years shown ranged somewhat less than the "desegregation is working" story of 1981-82.

For the 8th grade, the gap widens significantly in comparison with both the early primary grades of 1981-82 and the previous "segregated" years.

Following the children through the grades

The above comparison, of course, involves different groups of children in given grades over the years. A more meaningful comparison would involve following the same children through the grades. Such a comparison is severely hampered here by the paucity of grades tested in the pre-busing years and the failure to compile (release) data by race in the first three years of expanded testing under the busing order.

Nevertheless, we'll give it a try. As always, bear in mind the impact of white enrollment decline, the absence of which would certainly serve to make the gap even wider.

In 1974-75, black first graders trailed whites by 14.7 points. By 1981-82, black 8th graders trailed whites by 30.7 points.

In 1975-76, black first graders trailed whites by 15.9 points. By 1981-82, black seventh graders trailed whites by 29.2 points.

In 1976-77 (just two years before the start of forced busing), black first graders trailed whites (remember, these are "segregated" Wilmington blacks compared with suburban whites) by only 12.0 points. By the 6th grade in 1981-82 - after four years of forced busing - blacks trailed their white classmates by 27.6 points. In terms of the shortest span of years combined with the highest proportion of "desegregated" years, this is the most significant comparison made here. And the gap between blacks and whites has increased by 15.6 points, or by 130 per cent !

A final comparison under the data available here involves the first graders of 1971-72, the 4th graders of 1974-75, and the 11th graders of 1981-82 - the same group of children for purposes herein.

In 1971-72, the "segregated" black (Wilmington) first graders trailed their suburban white counterparts by only 12.6 points. Under the "still-segregated" system of 1974-75, these blacks, now in the 4th grade, were 20.8 points behind suburban white 4th graders. By 1981-82 and the 11th grade in the 4th year of "desegregation", these blacks trailed 11th grade whites remaining in the system by 37.1 points.

Closing remarks

All of the data compiled above is based on test score and enrollment information as released or supplied by the Delaware State Department of Public Instruction.

This data has been researched and compiled by William D. D'Onofrio, president of the National Association for Neighborhood Schools, the foremost national anti-busing citizens' lobby.

Mr. D'Onofrio is not an educator or an educational researcher. He is a Wilmington, Delaware insurance agent and tax accountant. As such, although Mr. D'Onofrio is experienced in the compilation of statistical information and arriving at results or conclusions therefrom, his analysis is devoid of the esoteric techniques and jargon of a more official (educationist) presentation.

This analysis is presented in the absence of candid analysis and conclusions by state and local school authorities and educational researchers concerning the effects of a draconian and heretofore unique court-ordered city-suburbs school racial-balancing scheme in New Castle County, Delaware, a scheme that was designed to preclude massive white flight, to provide equal opportunities (and, therefore, increasingly equal results) for minority children, and to coerce, for the good of the commonweal, integration.

The results and effects presented herein lead to an inescapable conclusion: forced busing in New Castle County has been an abject failure.

National Association for Neighborhood Schools
September 1, 1983

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